THE SENTINEL

Wild Beasts Skins in Commerce.

Spectator

The last few years have seen a marked disappearance from the leather industry of a form of supply which should never have reached the dimensions it attained—the hides of countless wild beasts. No one grudges to the purposes of trade the hides of the alligator or the shark, still less those of domesticated animals or of big game killed for food. But for more than twenty years there have come to the markets of America and Europe hundreds of thousands of hides, destined for the commonest commercial uses, stripped from wild animals which have been killed for the value of the hide alone. Whole species have been butchered to the last individual to make shoe leather. There is not much room for distinction between the "skin hunters" of North America, South Africa, or Australia. But in the former country at least the State Governments are adopting vigorous measures to stop this repulsive industry, and by limiting the number of deer which may be killed by individuals, prevent such destructive waste of animal life. We wish that these laws could be extended to all British colonies and dependencies. Wherever big game has entirely disappeared from districts where it formerly abounded, and wherever whole species have been exterminated, the mischief has in nearly every case been done not to procure food, but solely to obtain the creatures' skins. It is not the big game hunter, or the savage, or even the agriculturist, who destroys the creatures, but the "skin hunter." * * The advent of the skin hunters takes place at a particular period of development in recent settlements. He is never among the early pioneers, but is a kind of parasite in half occupied territories, but intensely disliked by the resident squatters, as he destroys the game on which they partly depend, though he sometimes succeeds in converting these to his own evil ways. In South Africa, for instance, the early Boer settlers, like the early pioneers of North America, killed the antelopes for meat, and used their skins for clothing. * * * About 1850, the Boars learnt that the myriads of antelope, quagga, and zebra which wandered over the plains had a marketable value other than as food or supplying leather hunting shirts. The skin hunters taught them that though the bodies of the creatures might be left to rot on the veldt, the hides, not tanned or dressed, but merely stripped from the bodies, were marketable, to supply the European demand for leather. The country was just sufficiently opened up to have arrived at the stage at which the business of the skin hunter pays. Freight is high, but not too high, and though hides of countless cattle and sheep may be had for little enough in the settled districts, the skins of the wild animals cost nothing at all, except the value of powder and shot. Even this was economized in South Africa. "The Boers of the pastoral republic became perfect adepts at skin hunting," writes Mr. Bryden. "They put in just sufficient powder to drive the missile home, and carefully cut out their bullets for future occasions. So lately as 1876, when I first wandered in Cape Colony, I well remember the wagon coming down from the Free State and Transvaal loaded up with nothing but the skins of blesbok, wildebeest and springbok. This miserable system of skin hunting has been, and still is, where any game remains, pursued in all native States of South Africa. Between 1850 and 1875 it is certain that some millions of these animals must have been destroyed in the Transvaal and Orange Free State." The slaughter was so prodigious, and the variety of wild animals so great, in these wild regions of South Africa, that the result made a sensible difference in the leather industry of Europe. * *

These South African game skins became a commercial article, relied upon for many years as part of the regular supply. It is amusing to note that quagga skins are still quoted as part of this, the fact being that the last of the quaggas was killed years ago to fill the skin hunter's pocket. In Mashonaland and Central Africa the trade still flourishes, though only the poorest of the Boers follow it, and they have to trek north of the Limpopo. The hides of the larger bucks, such as the sable antelope, the roan antelope, the hartebeest, or any of the zebras, are worth eight or nine shillings each, and there is now something to be made by selling heads and horns as curiosities. Leather made from the skins of these big antelopes is still in common use in high class bootmaking. No one knows exactly what animal may not have supplied the uppers or soles of his foot gear, and the possibilities range from the porpoise and the Arctic seal to the blesbok or the koodoo. Three other African animal's skins are in demand for curiously different purposes. The giraffes, as everyone knows, are killed so that their skins may be made into sandals for natives and sjambok whips for colonists. In the Soudan they are also killed for the sake of their hides, which are made into shields. Many of the Dervish shields captured during their attempt to invade Egypt under the Emir Mjumi were made of this material. The elephant and rhinoceros skins go to Sheffield. There they are used to face the wheels used in polishing steel cutlery. No other material is equally satisfactory, and it would be most difficult to secure a substitute. The rhinoceros skin used was formerly that of the white rhinoceros. Now that this species is extinct the black rhinoceros of Central Africa is killed for the purpose. Much of this immensely thick skin, which is not tanned, but used in the raw state, never leaves Africa. It is in great demand for making the round shields used by the Arabs and Abyssinians. A rhinoceros's hide yields eight large squares, each of which will make a round shield two feet in diameter, and each of these squares, even in the Soudan, is worth two dollars. The skin when scraped and polished is semi-transparent, like hard gelatine, and takes a high polish. Giraffe skin is even more valued as material for shields, as it is equally hard and lighter. Thus, while the South African giraffes are killed off to supply whips, those of North Central Africa are hunted to provide the Mahdi's Arabs with shield.

The Pharos of Alexandria.

Century Magazine

The French and Italian names for lighthouse, *phare*, *faro*, look back to the prototype of all lighthouses, Ptolemy's tower of Alexandria. Its place among the wonders may be in some dispute; but if natural right is to decide, there can be no question, for it combines all the claims. It was at once unique, grand and useful. On the score of serving pre eminently a practical purpose, it stands indeed alone among its colleagues. The idea of a lighthouse was a development out of the beacon fires which in remoter antiquity, were often kept burning at the entrance harbors to guide belated ships. Such we hear of at the mouth of the Piræus harbor, and on Sigeum, at the entrance of the Dardanelles. In Homer's time, the mariner overtaken by the night was glad to steer his craft by any chance watch-fire gleaming on the shore. So the Iliad (xix, 375) has it: "Or as when, o'r the sea, there cometh to the sailor's eyes the gleam of burning fire. There it is, burning on high among the mountains in some lonely camp, while they, against their will, are being carried by the storm blasts over the sea, the home of fishes, far from them they love."

In classical times, fleets of warships, sailing in the night, followed the beacon light blazing on the prows of the admiral's ships; but this was practised only in emergencies; for when the night was dark ships sought a harbor, if they could. The trips from port to port in the Ægean were usually short, and navigation was mostly daylight work. In the second decade of the third century B. C., Ptolemy Soter, Alexander's famous general, then King of Egypt, began the construction of the great Pharos tower; and it was completed about 282 B. C. under his successor Ptolemy Philadelphus. Sostratus of Cnidus was the architect; and, as the story goes, he carved his name as the builder, deep upon its stones, then plastered it over, and set the King's name in the more transient material. The story may not be true; but, at any rate, future ages read upon the stone the plain inscription: "Sostratus of Cnidus to the rescuing gods, in behalf of those who sail the seas." The stories told about its size both in antiquity and in the middle ages, has the bounds of the credible. Each of its four sides was said to measure at the base a stade—about six hundred feet. It was built of a white stone, in many stories, each narrowing toward the top. Its upper story had large openings towards the sea, through which the light of the great pitchwood fires gleamed out upon the treacherous approaches to the harbor. Far off at sea it could be seen, lifting itself like a planet in the sky, hours before the low coast of the Delta could be descried; hence Statius's verse:

Lumina noctivagæ tollit Pharos æmula Lunæ.

Josephus claims the light could be seen three hundred stades, i. e. over thirty miles out, at sea. The statement that the tower was over five hundred feet high is made by at least two late authors, but that is too much to believe. That its construction cost eight hundred talents (Ptolemaic), or well over a million dollars, is vouched for on the best authority; and this alone proves that, with skilled labor at 20 cents a day, no mean building was likely to result.

The island of Pharos, on the eastern end of which it was built, and from which it and all lighthouses of the Roman world after it were named, was separated from mainland, on which Alexander founded his city, by a half mile or more of shallow water. A wide mole, the heptastadion, built to join the island and the land, has since grown into a wide neck of land, bearing the present Mohammedan quarter of Alexandria. The exact spot where the famous lighthouse stood can no longer be determined. Perhaps it is covered by the present Fort Kait Bai; more likely it is a thousand feet or more to the east, and now covered by the sea. The structure remained standing down into the fourteenth century of our era, and then disappeared from mention. But it had done its work. For sixteen centuries it had guided to land the wandering craft of the Ægean; but, better than that, its example had gone out into all the lands. In Pliny's time already it had begotten many successors—two of them famous ones, the one at Ostia, and the other at Ravenna—and the generations of its successors have been coming on ever since.